
Yakima River Canyon Marathon

Race Review by Judy Fisher / 2015

The [YRCM](#) is a marathon created for runners. Seems obvious, but this race is small, personal and friendly, not like many large-scaled mega-marathons that are being offered today. Lenore and Bob Dolphin have been the Race Directors since the marathon's inception 17 years ago.



Bob, age 85, has over 500 marathons to his credit and he participated in Saturday's race by walking 13 miles of the course. This is an awesome couple, beloved by all who know them in the running community.

The marathon is a point-to-point course, running through the entire 23 miles of the Yakima River Canyon. The marathon begins in Ellensburg and follows the Yakima River downstream to Selah, on a paved, very curvy, cambered roadway. The net elevation drops over 300 feet, but two major uphill (one over a mile long!) make hopes of a personal best out of reach for most runners. Since the road is closed to outside traffic, there are no spectators. But the enthusiastic support of the volunteers at the water stations makes up for the lack of the cacophony of cheering, cowbells, and din at the larger races. Sheer basalt rock cliffs line the canyon, which rise as much as 2,000 feet above the river that carved the canyon. Here is the densest concentration of falcons, eagles, and hawks in the state, much of the land managed by the Bureau of Land Management. The peace and tranquility of the rolling barren hills, basalt cliffs, and gently flowing Yakima River is interrupted only by an occasional train whistle on the tracks below.

The weather this year was perfect for most runners, 47 degrees at the start in morning sunshine, clouding up mid-morning. There was often a tailwind, but occasionally a strong head or side wind coming up the canyon.

Although the [YRCM](#) is a challenging race, it attracts some of the fastest distance runners in the Northwest (this year, participants hailed from 20 states and two Canadian provinces). Seventeen participants have finished all previous fourteen YRCMs.

The marathon is a reunion race for the 100 Marathon Club North America members. Martin Rudow, recently retired editor/publisher of Northwest Runner Magazine, was the guest speaker at the pasta meal this year. An awards ceremony took place at 4:00 pm after the marathon. First time marathoners received special recognition.



The first male Silver Strider was Tacoma's Tony Phillippi, 53, at 3:04:24, second overall male. The first 50+ female was Mary Richards, 53, at 3:37:08, third female overall. Mary also holds the course record of 2:58:06, set in 2006. Sylvia Quinn, 78, Spokane, ran a fast time of 4:23:28, a World Class age-graded rating of 90.94%!

If running a marathon through the scenic wonders of a desert canyon sounds appealing, make some memories with this one. The women even get a rose at the finish, and the men, if they are lucky, get a hug from Lenore!



Judy Fisher and Bob Dolphin

By Judy Fisher

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